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SUBJECT: TALKS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF BURUNDI AND FNL FALTER

11. (U) Summary. Negotiations between the Government of Burundi (GOB) and the PALIPEHUTU-National Liberation Forces(FNL) in talks meant to start the 2006 cease-fire agreement faltered July 21, leading to the gradual departure of the FNL's delegation. The FNL's head of delegation, Jean-Berchmans Ndayishimiye, departed July 21, saying he would report to FNL leader Agathon Rwasa, and was followed over the next three days by the remaining fourteen members of the delegation. Following the FNL team's departure, the National Defense Forces (FDN) spokesman told the Embassy July

25 that the FNL is creating new positions north of Bujumbura. The FDN is increasing its presence in the affected areas and following the new FNL movements, and no reports of hostilities have been issued. Based on a recent meeting with peace process facilitators additional details will be provided in Septel. End Summary.

12. (U) Plans to implement the provisions of the September 2006 cease-fire agreement between the GOB and the FNL stalled on July 21 after Jean-Berchmans Ndayishimiye, the FNL's head of delegation, left Bujumbura. On July 22, while taking questions from the Burundian media, FNL delegation spokesman, Jacques Bigirimana, stated that Ndayishimiye left the talks to make a personal report on their progress to FNL leader Agathon Rwasa, saying that Ndayishimiye needed to report to Rwasa "on the battlefield."

13. (U) According to media reports, three senior members of the FNL delegation, including two officers, on July 23 "jumped the fence" of the compound where they were being housed during the negotiations, and retreated back to the bush. Following the disappearance of the three FNL members, the South African Protection Force removed security guards assigned to the delegation, and took away vehicles rented by the African Union for the delegation's use during the talks. The next day the rest of the FNL delegation, twelve people in total, left Bujumbura, alleging harassment by the South African guards assigned for their protection. The South African Protection Forces stated to the media they allowed them to leave, saying that the FNL delegates were not under arrest.

14. (SBU) In a conversation on July 23, Tanzanian Ambassador Brigadier General Francis Mndolwa appeared visibly frustrated by the FNL's actions, saying that his government had received no advance warning of the move. Mndolwa did not speculate on Rwasa's whereabouts, saying only that Rwasa had "returned to the bush." Tanzania has actively encouraged the GOB-FNL talks.

15. (U) Following the departure of the FNL delegation, FDN spokesman Colonel Adolphe Manirakiza told Embassy July 25 that the FNL is creating new positions in two provinces north of the capital. Manirakiza stated that the FDN is observing FNL movement in the Kanyosha Commune of Bujumbura Rurale Province, and in the Rukoko Forest in the southern region of Bubanza Province, just north of Bujumbura Rurale. Manirakiza said that the FDN is following the new FNL movements, and is increasing its presence in the two provinces. He stressed there have been no reports of hostilities. (Note: Bujumbura Rurale and Bubanza provinces have long been FNL strongholds, and travel restriction for U.S. Embassy personnel in Bujumbura Rurale are still in effect.)

16. (SBU) Comment. The departure from the talks in Bujumbura by the FNL suggests serious reservations on its part about the future of the cease-fire agreement. It remains to be seen if the FNL, by leaving the talks in Bujumbura, is attempting to gain leverage for future talks, or if it sincerely believes that the GOB is not negotiating in full faith. End Comment.
MOLLER